

# The GUIDELINE

## The Story of a Vintage Apprentice School Student Handbook

by *Bill Lee (EDA, 1959) & Tal Hardy (HDR, 1959)...The Publication's Creators*

In 1958, the Apprentice School's Student Council determined there was a need for a student handbook and they asked two apprentices with journalistic experience to create a guide for first-year apprentices. The two of us willingly undertook the task of developing, writing and illustrating this new Apprentice School publication. During our apprenticeship, we had become close friends and had previously served together in a variety of positions on *The Binnacle* and *The Broad A* staffs.

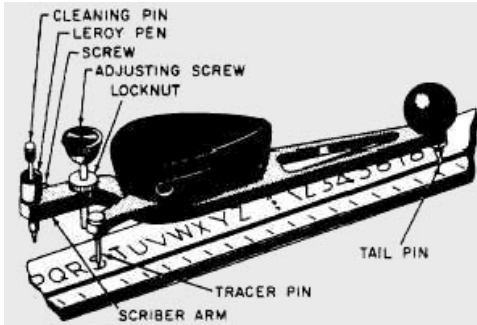
Our mentor was **O.K. "King" Goodwin**, member of the school's academic faculty (Hull Design) and faculty advisor to *The Broad A* staff. With his help, we outlined the scope of a student handbook for new Apprentices. This project quickly took on major proportions, as indicated by its table of contents:

Bill wrote much of the original text. Tal contributed several items, and lent his considerable artistic talents to the handbook's numerous illustrations.

Others who participated in making this idea a reality included **Ernie Branch** (EDA, 1959), **L.C. Taylor** (HDR, 1959), **Don Steppe** (MCH, 1960), **Buddy Childress** (EDM, 1960) and **Jay Burke** (EMD, 1960).

King Goodwin performed editing chores, and – if the truth be told – perhaps even a bit of censorship (if, for no other reason, to help facilitate our eventual graduation). The text, when finalized, was laboriously typed the old-fashioned way by **Jane Dibble** and **Colleen Everett** of the school's administrative staff.

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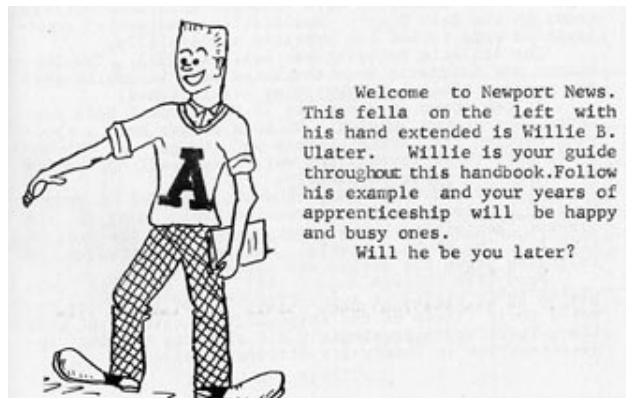


Titles were created in India ink, utilizing the Leroy Lettering method that all design Apprentices were once required to master. Bill, in particular, remembers how tedious that was, because he is left-handed and ‘Leroy’ doesn’t come that way. Text, titles and illustrations were arranged, and tediously pasted by hand on master sheets. The shipyard’s reproduction center then printed numerous copies of the 44-page original edition.

A heavy stock cover, with the school’s seal displayed on the back, completed the creation. Other than the cost of reproduction, underwritten by the Student Council, all elements of the handbook were created on our own time; not on shipyard time or using any shipyard materials. That’s our story, and we’re sticking to it...

We deliberately made each write-up short and, hopefully, interesting and useful to novice apprentices; especially those who came to Newport News from afar and were required to reside in the Apprentice Dorm. Our creation also included lots of ‘inside’ information about the school and its numerous activities for ‘locals’ who entered apprenticeship. Tal was a ‘dorm dweller’, and Bill was a ‘townie’, so our combined experiences were decidedly useful in determining what to include for the benefit of all.

The booklet’s introduction, reproduced here, introduced a fictional character that Tal created to guide the newcomer through the myriad of activities associated with the school, the shipyard and the surrounding community.



This symbolic figure appears throughout the handbook in a variety of situations; participating in the many scholastic, athletic and social activities described.



One of the last illustrations of the ubiquitous *Willie B. Ulater* in the handbook accompanied a write-up about the Apprentice Alumni Association. Far from the minds of individuals just entering the Apprentice School, this information, undoubtedly, became all too soon something of interest and value to them.

Our progressive handbook even had a ‘centerfold’ – but not the kind usually appreciated by young men. This publication’s centerfold was a map of the Virginia Peninsula, with numbered points of interest described in an index on the preceding and following pages. We designed it that way - for easy removal and use without destroying the rest of the publication.

A small cartoon-like image also appeared on that map, just above an arrow on the James River Bridge that was entitled “To North Carolina”. Those who knew us ‘way back when probably readily recognized the two individuals represented by this illustration.



Authors and illustrators in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century often included images of themselves in their work, and we shamelessly followed their example. We really thought we had ‘arrived’ and had become oh, so sophisticated.

The student handbook enjoyed at least two more editions; one in 1960 and in 1964. By then, we were both alumni, and so the task of updating our initial creation fell to younger apprentices. In 1960, **E. V. Hackenberg** (Class of 1961 – although no record that he completed his time as a Hull Designer can be found) served as editor and in 1964 the editors were **John Plaster** (SPF, 1967) and **Martin Givens** (MCH, 1965).

At the graduation exercises for the Apprentice School’s Class of 1959, we stood, appropriately, side-by-side as each of us proudly received the school’s Gold Journalism Award (with lefty Lee on the left...).



Soon thereafter, we went our separate ways. Bill took that bridge to North Carolina, to attend NC State. Tal remained behind on the Virginia Peninsula and started to raise a family as he continued to work in Hull Design.

Bill returned to NNS in 1963, but, unaccountably, our paths did not cross again, although our individual work places were less than a mile apart. Following distinctly different career paths, both of us eventually left the shipyard. Decades went by, and then, coincidentally, we both retired in 1998; Bill in North Carolina, Tal in York County.

After retiring, Tal turned his talents to raising grandchildren and vegetables, and has greatly enjoyed the opportunity to make an increased contribution of time to his long-standing service to the Lord. Years before retiring, he designed and then supervised the construction of the New Covenant Church in Hampton on Big Bethel Road.

In his retirement, Bill has utilized an extensive collection of NNS and A School material to pursue a long-awaited passion to research and write about ships, shipbuilders...and the Apprentice School. His research was (and still is) often augmented by forays to the Mariners’ Museum Research Library, where, in 2003, he quite accidentally learned from a mutual friend that his once-close-buddy, Tal, was living in York County.

A quick check of the Peninsula telephone book yielded a promising telephone number, and within minutes, four-plus decades melted away as we reunited verbally.

Arrangements were made for a more satisfying reunion on Bill's very next trip to Newport News. This picture was taken in Tal's home on that very enjoyable occasion.

Since then, we have happily corresponded frequently, and this historical review of our 1958 creation is but the latest chapter in our creative work together.

Before we know it, 2009 will be here, and we fully anticipate that we will be there, side-by-side, once again, at our class' 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. And so will *Willie B. Ulater*, if not visible, then in strong spirit.



*Created by Tal Hardy and Bill Lee, together again, August 2006*

